

## Wilderness Characteristics Inventory (Public)

FORM 1

## Documentation of BLM Wilderness Characteristics Inventory Findings on Record

1. Is there existing BLM wilderness characteristics inventory information on all or part of the area?

No \_\_\_\_\_ (Go to Form 2) Yes X (If yes, and if more than one area is within the area, list the unique identifiers for those areas.):

a. Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory

b. Inventory Area Unique Identifier (s): CDCA 344

c. Map Name (s)/Number(s): California Desert Wilderness Inventory – South Half 1979

d. BLM District (s)/Field Office (s): CDD/PSSCFO

## 2. BLM Inventory Findings on Record:

Existing inventory information regarding wilderness characteristics (if more than one BLM inventory area is associated with the area, list each and answer each question individually for each inventory area):

Inventory Source: 1979 Wilderness Inventory

[illegible]

Wilderness Characteristics Inventory (Public)

**FORM 2**

Current Conditions: Presence or Absence of Wilderness Characteristics

Area Unique Identifier CDCA 1344-1 Acreage 133,031

(If the inventory area consists of subunits, list the acreage of each and evaluate separately).

In completing steps (1) – (5), use additional space as necessary.

**(1) Is the area of sufficient size? (If the area meets one of the exceptions to the size criterion, check "Yes" and describe the exception in the space provided below),**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No X

Note: If "No is checked, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "N/A" for the remaining questions below.

Description (describe the boundaries of the area—wilderness inventory roads, property lines, etc.):

Roughly 48,000 acres are now part of the Mecca Hills (7,000 estimated) and Orocopia (40,725) Mountains Wilderness within this unit. The unit's boundary remains the same along the west and northwest with, a paved, Box Canyon Road; Interstate 10 to the north; Salt Creek Road and Kaiser Industrial Railroad to the east and southeast; and, to the south, the Bradshaw Trail and access road to the Coachella Canal and a wood pole utility line road. The remaining 85,000 acres are mainly checker-boarded with Private Lands and contains several Northern and Eastern Colorado (NECO) Designated Routes as permanent habitations and structures, roads, powerlines, flood control dikes, and some primitive, yet visible, ways that cross much of this area. Although the remaining acreage of the unit itself is over 85,000 acres, there are not 5,000 contiguous acres within the unit, therefore not meeting the size criteria of wilderness characteristics.

**(2) Does the area appear to be natural?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ N/A X

Note: If "No is checked, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "N/A" for the remaining questions below.

Description (include land ownership, location, topography, vegetation, and summary of major human uses/activities):

**(3) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remaining is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for solitude?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ N/A X

Description (describe the area's outstanding opportunities for solitude):

**(4) Does the area (or the remainder of the area if a portion has been excluded due to unnaturalness and the remaining is of sufficient size) have outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ N/A X

Note: If "No" is checked for both 3 and 4, the area does not have wilderness characteristics; check "N/A" for question 5.

Description (describe the area's outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation):

**(5) Does the area have supplemental values (ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historical value)?**

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ N/A   X  

Description:

(Add description here)

### Summary of Analysis\*

Area Unique Identifier: CDCA 1344-1

#### Summary

The remaining 85,000 acres are mainly checker-boarded with Private Lands and contains several Northern and Eastern Colorado (NECO) Designated Routes, permanent habitations and structures, roads, powerlines, flood control dikes, and some primitive, yet visible, ways that cross much of this area. Although the remaining acreage of the unit itself is over 85,000 acres, there are not 5,000 contiguous acres within the unit, therefore not meeting the size criteria of wilderness characteristics.

#### Results of analysis:

1. Does the area meet any of the size requirements? ☐ Yes ☒ No
2. Does the area appear to be natural? ☐ Yes ☒ No
3. Does the area offer outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation?  
☐ Yes ☒ No
4. Does the area have supplemental values? ☐ Yes ☒ No

#### Check one:

☐ The area, or a portion of the area, has wilderness characteristics and is identified as Land with Wilderness Characteristics (LWC)

☒ The area does not have wilderness characteristics.

#### Prepared by (team members):

John Johnson, ECFO - Environmental Protection Specialist, 6/10/2014

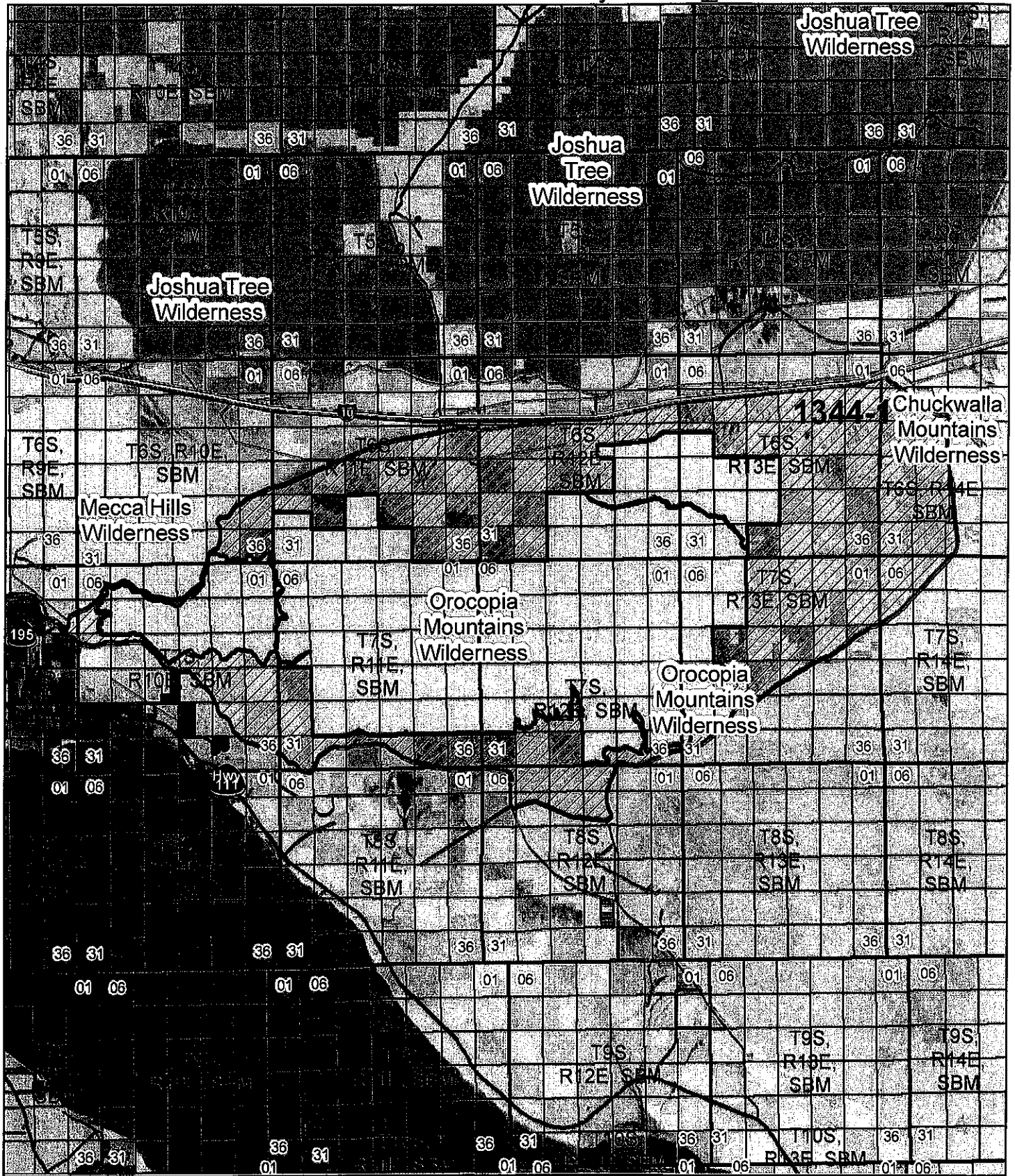
#### Reviewed by (District or Field Manager):

Name: J. R. Johnson Title: Field Manager

Date: 2/9/16

\*This form documents information that constitutes and inventory finding on wilderness characteristics. It does not represent a formal land use allocation or a final agency decision subject to administrative remedies under either 43 CFR or 1610.5-3

# Wilderness Character Inventory CDCA 1344-1



Legend	
	<b>Wilderness Inventory Units</b>
	<b>Federal Wilderness Surface Management</b>
	<b>Managing Agency</b>
	Bureau of Land Management
	US Forest Service
	National Park Service
	US Fish and Wildlife Service
	<b>Government Lands</b>
	Bureau of Land Management
	Forest Service
	National Park Service
	Fish and Wildlife Service
	Bureau of Reclamation
	Bureau of Indian Affairs
	Department of Defense
	Other Federal
	State
	Local Government



0 3.5 7 Miles  
1:249,197



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Project: CDCA\_1344-1



## AREA 343

### I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This area is bounded on the north by Interstate 10, on the east and southeast by the paved Box Canyon Road; and, on the south-southwest, by the Coachella Canal and a portion of a Riverside County maintained road.

### II. LAND OWNERSHIP

The boundaries include approximately 24 sections of non-public land scattered throughout, mostly in a checkerboard pattern and accounting for 35 percent of the total land area.

### III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

The majority of this roadless area contains the extremely colorful, deeply eroded, and sparsely-vegetated Mecca Hills. Small, narrow, steep-walled canyons wind throughout this area creating a natural maze within this badlands labyrinth. Sandy washes dissect the area and contain stands of ironwood, smoke trees, and palo verde, while scattered stands of ocotillo grow on the hilly slopes. Some portions of the Mecca Hills, known also as the Mud Hills, show evidence of the presence of the San Andreas Fault which has uplifted adding to the erosion and breaking off huge rock slabs. The northern and western portions of this roadless area are more gently sloping and include large desert washes such as Thermal Canyon. This portion is either in private land ownership or checkerboard ownership which creates areas of noncontiguous public lands.

### IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Within the solidly blocked portion of the Mecca Hills man's work is substantially unnoticeable and is an area where the earth and its community of life are undisturbed by man. Presently, the area is used by off-road vehicles, but much of the use occurs in the washes where visible alteration of the primeval character and influence of the land is not readily apparent. Some primitive ways do exist on the hills and erosion has occurred on the steep slopes. Although visible, the intimacy and extent of the canyon systems within the Meccas greatly reduces the imprint of man's work. The only portion within the Mecca Hills which has been excluded as not containing wilderness values is the Riverside County maintained road and campground in Painted Canyon. There is an Airway Beacon site and service road located in this area south of Cactus City.

The potential Wilderness Study Area boundary is common with the roadless area boundary on the east, west and south sides. The northwestern boundary follows a wash which cuts diagonally across the public/private boundary to near the beacon tower, then generally follows the contour at about the 1600 foot level back to Box Springs Road.

### V. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED TYPE OF RECREATION

Unlimited outstanding opportunities for solitude exist in the Mecca Hills due to the intricate passageways and complex canyon system which wind into the interior and tend to create a psychologically large area which effectively screens users from one another. Combined with this intimate type of solitude, outstanding opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation experience is easily obtained. Diverse landforms and colorful and highly eroded rugged terrain all add to primitive and unconfined movement.

### VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments against inclusion cited the history of off-road vehicle use. Field examination confirmed that evidence of this use was, for the most part, confined to sandy canyon bottoms and would pass with time; therefore, the impact was not long-term and would not impair the suitability of the area for consideration as wilderness. Other public comments addressed study phase considerations.

## AREA 344

### I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This roadless area parallels the paved Box Canyon Road to the west and northwest; Interstate 10 to the north; the Salt Creek Road and Kaiser Industrial Railroad to the

east and southeast; and, to the south, the Bradshaw Stage Road and access road along the Coachella Canal and a wood pole utility line road.

## II. LAND OWNERSHIP

Sections of non-public land forming a scattered checkerboard pattern account for approximately 35 percent of the area.

## III. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT

This area includes both the Orocopia Mountains and the southeastern portion of the Mecca Hills. The Mecca Hills include the often visited Sheep Hole Oasis, Hidden Springs, and the grotto. Rugged, colorful canyon walls are highly varied and in some situations exhibit fresh fault scarps. The water found at Hidden Springs is a source for wildlife such as coyote, rabbits, and Bighorn Sheep. In the desert washes grow ironwood, palo verde, smoke tree, and the palm enclaves at Sheep Hole Oasis and Hidden Springs. The Orocopia Mountains are an extremely diverse and varied mountain landform. The northern portion is characterized by open valleys, dissected ridges, and an isolated mountain. The southern portion consists of highly colorful and dramatic eroded canyons and ridges. Vegetation is sparse but varied. In the open valleys are found creosote along with ironwood in the washes. Ocotillo is found in the hilly slopes as well as a small cluster of yucca near the Red Canyon jeep trail. Views of the Salton Sea are notable throughout the southern portion of this roadless area. The northeastern portion of this area contains a checkerboard pattern of noncontiguous public lands as does a portion of the interior of the Orocopia Mountains.

## IV. NATURAL CONDITION

Much of this area is within a BLM area closed to motorized vehicles and is an area which retains its primeval character and influence with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable. Some past mining activities have occurred in the Orocopias but are of insignificant importance and have done little to nothing to alter the natural condition of the land. Some primitive ways do penetrate portions of this roadless area, but the majority are in washes or in areas where the immensity and ruggedness of the terrain remain the dominant feature. In the northeast corner the natural character has been adversely affected by bulldozing scarps and ORV scars. The northern boundary also excludes the flood control dike system south of Interstate 10, and flood control dikes north of the Coachella Canal along the southern boundary. All of the checkerboard land ownership pattern, in the area, has been excluded from the inventory as it does not contain contiguous public land.

## V. OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOLITUDE OR A PRIMITIVE AND UNCONFINED TYPE OF RECREATION

The rugged character of the terrain and the diversity of land forms insure outstanding opportunities for solitude in both areas. Rocky outcrops and numerous canyons add to the ability of the landscape to screen visitors and add to the sense of isolation. Opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of recreation are outstanding due to diversity and the ability of the site to ensure unrestricted movement.

## VI. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

Comments received pointed out popularity of the area by recreational vehicle users, the overall high natural value of much of the area and questioned the BLM about deleting the extreme eastern end of the roadless area.

## AREA 345

### I. PHYSICAL BOUNDARIES

This triangular-shaped area is bounded on the north by the Coachella Canal and access road; on the southeast, by the Kaiser Eagle Mountain Industrial Railroad; and, on the southwest, by Highway 111.

### II. LAND OWNERSHIP

This area does not contain 5,000 acres of contiguous public lands and is not of sufficient size to make practical its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition. Furthermore, man-made improvements on the private land ownership have adversely affected the primeval character.